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FEDERAL THOUGHT CONTROL

by Forest A. Harness

In the issue of HUMAN EVENTS of March 24, 1948, it was observed with soundest logic that we must assume Americans to be intelligent people, or else admit that our political institutions are absurd. Indeed these institutions can endure only so long as they are supported not only by an intelligent, but also by an alert and accurately informed citizenry, quick to repel any encroachment upon its priceless heritage.

Our national history over nearly two centuries has pretty well demonstrated the soundness of American intelligence, the rightness and decency of American political instincts. Like any human record, our own, to be sure, is marked by mistakes, many of them tragic. But the errors are due not so much to the lack of native intelligence as to inadequate or misleading information. When the American people have had a sufficient grasp of the problems, their judgment has proved sound.

The worst you can say of the average American politically is that he often displays a baffling indifference to his responsibilities as a citizen. The blessings of liberty, like a windfall inheritance, he too often treats as something to be enjoyed in perpetuity, with none of the worries and work of stewardship. He does not reflect upon the daily reminders that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Such warnings, focusing the wisdom painfully acquired from political experience, are too often accepted merely for appropriate framing as wall models.

Such an American -- and his name is legion -- is a ready victim for Federal thought control, the comparatively new technique of bureaucracy which is as dangerous to free government as it is insidious.

The average American is now generally aware of the fact that dozens of Federal agencies and activities have come to impinge upon his daily life. It is even recognized that these agencies have come to exert a real and constant influence upon public opinion.

Certainly every Member of Congress realizes the tremendous power of this new technique, for he feels it every day he is in office. He lives with the lobbies, good and bad, which constantly seek to influence legislation. And he can hardly fail to realize that the most powerful

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and persistent of them all is the lobby which Federal bureaucracy has come to operate around the clock every day of the year.

But even the most thoughtful students of government stand amazed at the immensity, the power, and the persistence of the bureaucratic propaganda machine, as revealed in the recent Congressional inquiries on the subject of Publicity and Propaganda in the Executive Departments.

II

As a point of departure, the Committee learned from Budget Bureau statistics that Federal public information services spent a total of $74,829,467 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1946. Such a figure, in the Federal budget, is unimpressive. As national expenditures go, it is in fact hardly a respectable crumb. The total is worth noting, however, because taxpayers are at least entitled to know how much of their money is spent for the purpose of conditioning them to greater and greater spending by Federal bureaucracy. The 1946 figure is also significant because it is nearly three times the total outlay of $28,000,000 for Federal publicity in the fiscal year 1941.

The Committee also learned from these 1946 statistics that the taxpayers are supporting at least 45,000 federal employees who devote their time wholly or in part to definitely identified information activities. The term, "definitely identified" is used as deliberate understatement. There is no accurate way to determine how many other officials and employees, or what funds from other sources, contribute directly or indirectly to the total volume of Government propaganda. But bureaucrats being what they are, it is safe to assume that many devote some of their time and effort, paid for by the taxpayers, to selling Americans the idea that they need more and more bureaucratic guidance.

The actual aggregate cost of Federal publicity and propaganda, therefore, is a matter of guesswork. Certainly this actual total is far greater than the official statistics indicate. Yet the tangible cost, large as it is, remains the smallest cause for public concern over governmental propaganda. The chief cause for anxiety is the injury which this aspect of bureaucracy does to the philosophy of Constitutional government; the insidious threat it poses to free institutions.

III

The first instinct of bureaucracy is self-preservation; the second, growth. Like any living organism, a Federal bureau, once launched, seeks constantly to justify its existence, to perpetuate itself and to expand. Witness the amazing spectacle of WPA, an agency designed to provide emergency relief during the depression of the early Thirties. A

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decade later it was still clinging desperately to existence, on the pretext of serving as a wartime manpower training and placement agency.

Fantastic though that performance was, it cannot be called unusual. In fact, it is almost typical. In the lush soil, the salubrious climate, of Federal paternalism prevailing since 1933, bureaucracy has luxuriated as the rankest tropical jungle. Now that a sharp change of political climate threatens, the embattled bureaus fight back with every weapon at their command. None is quite so effective as the technique of conditioning the public mind and molding public thinking in behalf of the vested bureaucratic interest.

Witness the significant examples of this technique revealed by the Congressional Committee in a year of intensive work which still has barely scratched the surface. The Eightieth Congress, attempting to perform on its 1946 campaign commitments, sought to cut Federal expenditures. As an example, the House cut AAA appropriations. The moment this bureaucratic luxury was threatened, a master telegram went from the Department of Agriculture to its state agents, urging organized protests against the cut. The order went step by step down the line, with the deliberate and specific purpose of generating a mail campaign which would force the Senate to restore the cut.

Again, witness the persistent campaign waged by a combination of bureaus, mobilized by the Federal Security Agency, to force a program of compulsory health insurance or socialized medicine through Congress. Here, Federal agencies prepared and distributed propaganda, sent officials and employees traveling about the country and inspired a device called Health Work Shops, designed primarily to generate pressure upon Congress for passage of the Wagner-Murray-Dingle bill. These activities were carried out at the expense of the taxpayers, to sell the idea that the national health should be the sole responsibility of a medical bureaucracy in Washington.

Again, witness the attitude of the Department of the Army, which stands convicted by the record of spending public funds to gain popular approval of a permanent system of Universal Military Training in peacetime. At public expense this Department sent lecturers and radio speakers about the country, prepared a variety of pro-UMT material for speeches and panel discussions and in various ways encouraged its use; even carried influential civilians in military planes from hundreds of communities to Ft. Knox, Kentucky, to observe a model training unit in operation there.

Additionally, citizens should consider the evidence this Congressional Committee has collected in regard to policies of the Bureau of

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Reclamation of the Interior Department. The evidence suggests that this Bureau holds as its most important objective the establishment of permanent bureaucratic controls over the vast areas of the United States which its authority touches. The evidence also indicates misuse of public funds in extending and entrenching the authority of this Bureau.

IV

When Federal bureaus are successful in molding public opinion and generating popular support for their own predetermined objectives, we have indeed arrived at a system of Federal thought control which exactly parallels the mechanics of dictatorship.

The danger has long been recognized. Congress years ago provided a specific safeguard against such misuse of public funds, in Section 201, Title 18 of the United States Code. No thoughtful individual in or out of Government can doubt the wisdom of this specific prohibition against Federal propaganda.

It ought to be obvious to everyone that the American people should not be forced by Federal agencies to pay for publicity and propaganda designed to influence and direct their thinking. Such a paternalistic activity can be justified only if we agree that Government must guide and direct the American people because they lack the good sense to act wisely or safely for themselves. There may be much to say for the objective of any particular Federal agency in any particular issue. But no thoughtful citizen will conclude that the end sought justifies the means of Federal propaganda as now promoted from Washington.

Actually, the merits in any immediate issue are secondary in this vital matter. If the tremendous power of Federal propaganda can be applied for a good and wise purpose on one occasion, it can be applied just as effectively on another for a purpose mischievous and dangerous.

Whether the immediate purpose of Federal propaganda can be called good or bad, it remains unquestionable that individual liberty and free institutions cannot survive when the vast power of government is marshalled against the people in order to promote any political philosophy, or to perpetuate any particular group of officeholders.

Forest A. Harness, Representative from the Fifth Indiana District, is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Publicity and Propaganda, Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments. The significant "Intermediate Reports" of this Committee may be obtained through his office.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events September 1, 1948

By Frank C. Hanighen

Congressman Forest Harness, whose article appears in this issue, is a strong opponent not only of "Thought Control", but also of Universal Military Training, in behalf of which -- as Mr. Harness points out -- an avalanche of propaganda was released upon the nation. Despite this attempt at mental conditioning, UMT as a long-range military program could not obtain the votes in Congress necessary for passage. Instead, the two houses passed the draft act, on the understanding that a military emergency existed and that the services needed men immediately to fill gaps in their ranks. The legislators returned to their constituencies apparently satisfied that the will of the people had been given proper statutory form and that the Defense establishment would carry out the intent of Congress.

But well-informed sources within the services have informed this column that UMT has risen from the ashes of the 80th Congress with surprising vitality; that the Army is proceeding as if UMT were the norm under which the draft act should operate. Despite the fact that the draft bill was represented as essential to a very urgent military situation, G-1 (Personnel) and G-3 (Organization and Training) are proceeding with great deliberation, as if there were no present emergency and as if UMT, and not the draft act, had been the purpose of Congress. These subdivisions of the Defense Department appear to feel no urgency about the situation in Europe and are evidently basing their plans for draftees on a long-range program. As our informants say, these Pentagon branches are trying to put over UMT secretly in defiance of the will of Congress and under cover of the draft act. On the other hand, it is observed that the Air Corps is taking a quite different attitude. Our sources remark, "There is a sense of urgency about our air preparations which seems completely absent in G-1 and G-3".

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There are some interesting comments on the spy probe which do not (but probably will) appear in the press. We have no apology for reporting these unattributed observations, made by competent persons, especially since a great deal of the talk of several years ago is now being confirmed by Congressional committees. We recall how some of this talk was then scornfully pooh-poohed by certain ultra-conservatives whose amazement today is a marvel to see.

If the Government really co-operated with the Congressional committees, the work of exposure would not be so protracted. A well-informed legal expert tells us that various figures called to the stand have made certain confessions to police agencies, the FBI, the Department of Justice, and other Governmental authorities. In the past few weeks, some individuals have either publicly denied these statements on the stand, or have dodged the questions. If the Government stood ready to produce the original confessions from the files, the processes on the Hill would be thereby facilitated. This point brings up another matter -- the role of J. Edgar Hoover. The FBI is reportedly in sympathy with the Hearings and if the FBI head were to testify frankly, much of the "mystery" might be dissipated.

But Mr. Hoover is not called, nor does he offer to testify. Here hangs many a tale involving politics -- recent, present and future. It is believed that, some years ago, the FBI chief, under orders from his superiors in the Roosevelt administration, failed to give "Prosecutor" Dewey the help the latter wanted in a certain case; and that candidate Dewey feels that, if he wins in November, he should replace Mr. Hoover. Consequently, some Republicans on the Hill have been urged to

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visit Pawling and "fix things up", so that Mr. Hoover and candidate Dewey's party could co-operate in completing the exposure of the spy rings -- and Mr. Hoover's talents could continue to be employed after November.

Another topic of much private discussion concerns the list of Soviet agents in the U. S. Government, which Canadian Premier Mackenzie King reportedly gave to Mr. Truman circa January, 1946. Oddly enough, the House Committee had forgotten this report and only awoke to its importance when an outside source reminded the members a few weeks ago. One member of the Committee was then reportedly prepared to travel to Canada in search of the list -- but did not. The only explanation elicited has been a reference to "international complications". True, it would be difficult for a foreign Premier to agree to testify on Capitol Hill. But, it is asked, why should not the Committee obtain an affidavit from Mr. Igor Gouzenko, now resident in Canada, and possessed of the reported 36 names given to Mr. Truman?

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From Plutarch, as revised by Democratic Chairman Senator J. Howard McGrath, in The Democrat, August 26: "After the failure of his haberdashery venture, Harry S. Truman returned to Independence, Mo., to consider his future."

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We talked today with an American official concerning the unexpected demise of Zhdanov. This official has been a student of Soviet affairs since the founding of the U. S. S. R. and for some years served as a member of the U. S. mission to Moscow. He had one very definite opinion about the deceased Communist Party boss. Zhdanov bore the onus for the launching of the Finnish war of 1939-40 and went into temporary eclipse as a result of that far from brilliant example of Russian military operations. From that day on, our friend is convinced, dates Zhdanov's anti-Americanism. Mixed with the recollection of President Roosevelt's bitterly anti-Soviet utterances during the Finnish war was the personal humilation arising from the disasters which overtook the badly trained Soviet divisions which were thrown into Finland at the beginning of the campaign.

Our friend goes on to recall that Zhdanov's absence from American diplomatic functions and social affairs was very noticeable thereafter. He conspicuously avoided any contacts with members of the American mission. Hence, our informant argues, it should have been no surprise that Zhdanov became known as an outstanding exponent of the anti-American Soviet policy, as well as for his belligerent nationalism. "Zhdanov's death", remarks the official, "may or may not have been a natural one. But it will be interesting to see if a new team appears at the side of Stalin. If, for instance, a slightly dust-worn Litvinoff should again appear on the scene -- well, that's the time to buy common stocks."

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General Clay is reported to be optimistic about the immediate prospects of holding Berlin. But those in Washington who are in a position to know say that the American commander's gorge is rising as a result of the policies of our Allies, and the consequences of those policies on the necessary objective of reviving the German economy. Clay's irascibility is due, in part, to the demands of Belgium and Holland for small strips of Germany territory along the borders of those countries. Clay reportedly feels that such demands are piddling in comparison with the greater problems, that they envenom the atmosphere and should not be pressed. Additionally, Clay has complaints about the British, specifically on two counts.

(1) The British are insisting on the dismantling of the German synthetic rubber plant in northern Germany; and (2) they are resisting American proposals for an increase in the permitted ceiling of German steel production capacity. Clay is

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said to feel that Britain, in taking these stands, is motivated by purely national economic interests; that is, Britain fears competition from the German rubber and steel concerns. He believes that Britain should subordinate her policies to the primary goal of reviving German industry in the interest of general European recovery.

The steel problem is crucial to German and European recovery. This column has just received a report from Dusseldorf, in the Ruhr, which illuminates the matter. According to the report's estimates, the German steel industry (in the Western zones) now has a capacity of about 13.5 million tons a year. Under the European recovery program, Western Germany will need about 14 million tons of steel annually, for the next five years. In short, Germany would be not far from self-sufficient in steel production, if the industry were operating at 100 per cent capacity. However, under the present dismantling policy which Clay wishes to modify and the British wish to maintain, the authorized production capacity would be only about 10.7 million tons a year. In other words, if the British prevail on this question, the United States will presumably have to supply Germany with about 3 million tons a year out of its already overstrained steel industry. The implications of such exportation of steel, in the present inflationary situation, are obvious.

Our Dusseldorf information points to the manifest absurdity of the plans for steel plant dismantling. For instance, the Gusstahlfabrik Bochum factory for cast steel is ordered dismantled, whereas the Weitmar works, much more adaptable to armament uses, is permitted to remain intact. Furthermore, about 80 per cent of all electro-steel furnaces are slated for dismantling. These furnaces produce fine steel sheets which will be urgently needed for machinery demands. No wonder, then, that the Economic Association of the Iron and Steel Industry of Western Germany has served notice that it will not be responsible for the disadvantages to European recovery resulting from dismantling and has consequently recommended that its representatives refuse further co-operation with Anglo-German dismantling committees.

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The economic waste of the dismantling policy is well described in Is There Still a Chance for Germany? (Human Affairs Pamphlets), by Professor Karl Brandt of Leland Stanford University. Dr. Brandt writes: "Viewed purely from a practical economic standpoint, as a method of reparations and transfer of capital, continued dismantling borders on insanity. Taking apart an industrial plant is a most costly wrecking activity, for it yields at best 10-15 per cent of the value of the plant wrecked, and often enough, much less. The costs involved in skilled labor, power, tools, acetylene, oxygen, and transportation resources are many times the salvaged scrap value. When the salvaged machines or parts finally arrive at their destination, they require the readdition of all the capital that was scrapped at the original installation. . . .

"An outstanding illustration is the dismantling of the modern steel plant at Borbeck, Ruhr. Before the dismantling of the metal parts could start, 35 tons of brick work had to be chiseled out and moved away. Since there were few machines in the plant -- for the most part furnaces, heat-conveying pipes, and huge structural steel parts too large to be transported -- all that could be salvaged was steel scrap, such as plates and beams. The dismantling of this plant began in the spring of 1946. It is estimated that the job will not be completed until 1950. The peak employment of workers on this job was 2,800 men. It took 60 technicians 14 months to mark parts before actual dismantling operations could get under way. It took 2,500 freight cars and 20 barges to haul the 50,000 tons of steel scrap thus far salvaged to the port of Hamburg. . . . If this foundry had employed workers to start making productive capital instead of destroying it, the European economy would have made substantial progress. What Anglo-American dismantling orders do is to continue, two and a half years after the war, what the bomber squadrons did not finish in 1945."

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Book Events

Of Flight and Life, by Charles A. Lindbergh. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $1.50. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

The earnest little essay is, in effect, a history of the spiritual crisis into which Colonel Lindbergh has been plunged by his discovery that the material science, which for most of his life served him as a religion, is not after all a way of salvation. He finds that science works quite as readily for evil as for good, that it has already destroyed a great part of the civilization to which it owes its existence and that it is more likely than not to destroy the rest. It has led the Western world into its present tragic dilemma. The techniques of destruction which have resulted from scientific discoveries of the West are now turned against us, so that our hope of survival depends upon the development of newer and yet more destructive powers. Nevertheless, any effort to preserve our hegemony solely by material power must call for the abandonment of everything we have cherished in civilization, for it would mean "training American youth in the regime of the policeman and the soldier", and "a Spartan discipline which, generation after generation, could never be relaxed" -- in short, a form of social organization almost indistinguishable from that which would be imposed by the enemy which threatens us.

Colonel Lindbergh's renunciation of what he now confesses to have been idolatry, is, I think, of the greatest interest, for he has been in many ways an avatar of his generation. Here, then, is final evidence that the dream of progress, which provided the mythological sanction of scientific discovery and invention, has ended. One need but compare this testament with such a work, for example, as F. S. Marvin's The Century of Hope to observe what a tremendous change of historical vision and metaphysical climate has occurred in barely thirty years. Colonel Lindbergh has lived to see "the life-saving miracles of medicine perverted toward the murderous ends of biological warfare". He has seen "the science I worshipped and the aircraft I loved destroying the civilization I expected them to serve, and which I thought as permanent as the earth itself". He has also observed the great psychological devastation resulting from methods of labor and forms of pleasure divorced from nature and by an artificial "standard of living" which must be paid for in frustration and bitterness.

There is an unconscious pathos in Colonel Lindbergh's rather confused groping for some new revelation to replace the faith which he finds has betrayed him. Here his unfamiliarity with other disciplines of thought than those of the laboratory and the factory becomes almost painfully evident. He is apparently not even yet wholly free of the spell of science, for he can speak of "the amorality of truth" and the dangers of too much knowledge, as though truth and fact were necessarily equivalent. He expresses some scorn for "rigid rules of logic", and this may account for his ambiguity in dealing with general ideas of any sort. It is not even always clear precisely what he means by science. "Hiroshima", he tells us, "was as far from the intention of the pure scientist as the Inquisition was from the Sermon on the Mount". Now here, I take it, the pure scientist means the mathematician; but the scientific principle is that the deductions of abstract mathematics must be verified empirically; that is, by sensible demonstration, as Professor Einstein's famous formula was verified at Los Alamos. It seems reasonable, then, to demand of the pure scientist by what epistemology he supposed that men would be content with abstract truth for its own sake. As for the Inquisition, which left the pure scientist, Copernicus, pretty much alone, it has been roundly abused these five hundred and more years for taking action against the practical scientist, Galileo Galilei, who verified Copernicus' calculations by means of a telescope, and thereby, as a contemporary philosopher has pointed out, made a god of the machine.

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